

## Poppy POV

The nurse gave me a nice, scented bath below my neck because there were bandages still wrapped on my head. I felt... renewed. I was weighed down both mentally and physically so much that I allowed myself this little luxury of being given a bath.

She made me wear baggy leggings and a cute mickey mouse polo. As she was trying to tangle the knots in my hair very carefully, she said, "You look very beautiful, m'lady."

My eyes snapped to her in the mirror. M'lady? "Please call me Poppy," I said to her. Perhaps this was how they communicated here.

She smiled and nodded. "Poppy, you are very beautiful. Perfect for our Alpha Damon."

A pale blush rose on my cheeks at the mention of his name. She giggled. "There! You are ready now. Let me inform our Luna."

A pang of jealousy pierced my heart. "Luna? You mean Alpha Damon is married? And his Luna is not his mate?" I couldn't believe I was having this conversation with the nurse, but the words shot out of my mouth before I could stop them.

Suddenly, she burst into laughter. She laughed so hard that she had tears in her eyes. When she stopped laughing, I was fuming, but I had to keep that in control because obviously if Damon was married, there was nothing I could do and I was going to thwart every move he took towards me.

She wiped the water from her eyes and said, "Poppy, the current Luna of the Umbra pack is Luna Mary, who is Alpha Damon's mother. But she is relinquishing her position."

Oh. My mouth was surely gaping wide because my throat became dry instantly. Stupid assumptions. But it wouldn't be a lie if I said that I was relieved. "Why is she relinquishing her position?" I asked after recovering from my stupor.

The nurse lowered her face next to mine and said, "That you have to ask her."

I stared into her eyes which were hiding a lot of things and which I wanted to know. "What is your name?" I asked.

"Betty," she said with a smile.

A loud knock on the door broke our reverie.

"Luna Mary!" Betty said and curtsied her.

When I snapped my head in that direction, I saw a very pretty woman with long dark hair that were braided neatly, standing at

the door. The resemblance between Damon and his mother was striking. They had the same glacial blue eyes and straight nose. I think rest of his features came from his father.

I got up, my hands clasped in the front and curtsied like Betty did.

Mary came to me and grabbed my hands in hers. With a warm smile on her face that lightened my mood, she said, "How are you doing, Poppy?"

"I am well," I said in a hoarse voice.

"That's great to hear," she said and squeezed my hand. "Come." She tugged me to sit on the couch. When we sat down, she looked at the nurse who scurried away. Mary's gaze drifted to my bandages. "Is your head still hurting?"

"A little," I said, short on thinking of the conversation I could have with Luna Mary. But there was a fire in that beautiful face of hers that had crinkles at the corner of her eyes. Hazy memories of my childhood flashed in my mind. Mary's aroma and the warmth about her brought remembrances that were so intertwined with those of my mother. Those small moments of affection that disappeared like tiny fragments the moment I touched upon them. The sudden swirl of emotions and hazy memories pounded in my mind with a dull force.

My eyes stung and a tear rolled out. I am sure all mothers were like that.

"Why are you crying, Poppy?" she said as she cupped my cheek. I couldn't help but lean on it.

I shook my head. "It's nothing much, I— I remembered my mom. I mean—" I lowered my face to look at the dress I had bunched up in my lap. "I don't remember her as such, but she must be—" My throat just... choked.

She cupped both my cheeks and lifted my face. "I am so sorry about your mom."

Did she know about my mother?

"You can call me mom," she added as her lips gently lifted up.

I chuckled feeling slightly awkward.

She pressed a kiss on my forehead. "Poppy, we haven't met earlier, but I am so glad that Damon found you. Damon's father was injured in a sudden attack and he is in coma now. We have declared Damon as the next Alpha of the Umbra pack. I know it is too much to tell, but this is my duty—"

"Umbra pack?" I muttered as something flashed in my mind. A cage fight. Between two very strong men. I swallowed down my saliva.

Mary nodded. "Yes, Umbra pack. Damon is now the Alpha of the Umbra pack and you are his mate."

My jaw dropped. "His mate..." Was that the reason why I was feeling so strongly about him? Why were things going so fast? My body shuddered as another bout of memories bounced in my head. Of me making love, of someone hauling me on his shoulder, of someone hating me, of a woman hitting me.

"Yes, Poppy. You are his mate." Then her expressions softened. "Would it be too much to ask you to marry my son?"

I gasped. "What? But—" My head pounded with a headache. I was too confused.

"Poppy!" His voice came from the door.

I snapped my head in his direction. "Damon..." I murmured. He rushed to me and gathered me in his arms. He pressed my head against his chest. "I am sorry..." he muttered as he kissed my head, as I realized that I was crying. But I felt so safe in his arms.

I lifted my face and craned my neck to see him. "You are my mate?"

He glanced at his mother and nodded at me. "I am."